

I rise today in support of H.R. 5900, the Airline Safety and Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act. Today we have the opportunity to make good on the promise we made to the Families of Flight 3407 when we passed the Airline Safety and Pilot Training Improvement Act in October of last year. Our promise that Congress would act to correct the lack of oversight and safety standards that contributed to the crash of Continental Flight 3407 in Buffalo, NY in February of 2009, taking the lives of 50 people. Three residents of New Jersey's 12th Congressional district were on this flight; Lorin Maurer, Ron Gonzales and Coleman Mellett. I have spoken with and heard from their families and friends, and my thoughts and prayers go out to them as they cope with the loss of these outstanding individuals. Lorin was a rising star at Princeton University whose positive attitude and volunteerism served as a shining example for the community. Ron was a tireless advocate for his community and he worked hard to save children who were in crisis due to domestic violence, drugs, gangs, and other social ills. And Coleman was a talented musician. Their passing was a huge loss to our community. I have been vigilant in working to ensure that we address the serious safety concerns that led to the crash.

A series of National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) hearings exposed the disturbing fact that the crash of Flight 3407 was preventable. The pilots had received inadequate training on how to recover from a stall and how to proceed in icing conditions. Severe pilot fatigue also was identified as the cause of the crash. The NTSB found that regional carriers are held to lower safety standards than national carriers despite regional airlines' accounting for one-half of all scheduled flights in the United States. As a result, five of the last seven fatal commercial plane crashes involved regional carriers. As more Americans rely on commuter airlines for air service, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) must take aggressive action to ensure that there is no difference in the level of safety provided by different air carriers. The NTSB hearings also made clear that the FAA has failed to issue regulations based on previous NTSB recommendations to establish uniform standards for training and performance. We owe it to the families and friends of the victims of the Flight 3407 to take action to prevent such tragedies in the future.

Last year I joined my colleagues from Upstate New York, Christopher Lee and Brian Higgins in introducing the One Level of Safety Act. Our legislation would require regional carriers to meet the same training and safety standards of national carriers. Additionally, it would require the FAA to implement the unfulfilled NTSB recommendations that were found to be responsible for this crash. I would like to thank Chairman Costello for including these important provisions in the Airline Safety & Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act, and I urge my colleagues to support it.